

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 HONG K 00751 181039Z

17

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 OMB-01 SAJ-01 NIC-01 AID-20 ACDA-19 EB-11

COME-00 COA-02 DLOS-06 FEA-02 INT-08 SCI-06 DRC-01

/170 W

----- 011957

R 180801Z JAN 74

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9307

INFO AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

S E C R E T HONG KONG 751

NOFORN

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: PFOR, VS, CH

SUBJ: RVN/PRC DISPUTE OVER SOUTH CHINA SEAS ISLANDS

SUMMARY: DESPITE SOUTH VIETNAMESE CLAIMS OF INCREASED PRC
OCCUPATION OF THE DISPUTED ISLANDS IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA,
IT IS UNCERTAIN TO WHAT EXTENT, IF ANY, CHINA HAS INCREASED
ITS ACTIVITY IN THE AREA. WE SUSPECT THE PRC WILL BE CONTENT
TO LET ITS JAN. 11 STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD STAND BY ITSELF
UNLESS SAIGON TAKES FURTHER STEPS TO TAKE PHYSICAL CONTROL OF
THE ISLANDS. END SUMMARY.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 HONG K 00751 181039Z

1. THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE FOREIGN MINISTRY STATEMENT OF JAN 16

SUGGESTS THAT THE PRC HAS RECENTLY INCREASED ITS OCCUPATION OF ISLANDS UNDER DISPUTE IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA. THE STATEMENT PARTICULARLY REFERS TO THE TAIPING (ITU ABA,) NANWEI (SPRATLY,) AND TUNGSHA (PRATAS) ISLANDS. NEWS REPORTS HAVE ADDED THAT THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE HAVE SPOTTED ABOUT TWENTY CHINESE FISHERMEN ON ROBERT ISLAND IN THE PARACEL/HSISHA GROUP WHO RAISED A PRC FLAG. THE GVN MILITARY SPOKESMAN SAID ON JAN. 17 THAT SOUTH VIETNAMESE WARSHIPS HAD BEEN ORDERED TO SHADOW TWO CHINESE GUNBOATS SEEN IN THE AREA.

2. OUR RECORDS DO NOT SQUARE WITH GVN'S ACCOUNT OF PRC ACTIVITY IN THE AREA. ROC FORCES (NOT PRC) HAVE REPORTEDLY OCCUPIED ITU ABA AND PRATAS ISLANDS FOR SEVERAL YEARS--THE FORMER SINCE 1956--AND HAVE BUILT INSTALLATIONS ON THEM (INR RESEARCH STUDY OF SEPT. 14, 1971).K ON THE QUESTION OF ROBERT ISLAND, THE INR STUDY NOTED THAT CHINESE PERSONNEL (PRC) HAD BEEN SPOTTED THERE IN THE NINETEEN-FIFTIES BUT SAID THAT IN 1971 IT WAS APPARENTLY OCCUPIED BY THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE.

3. INFORMATION AVAILABLE HERE IS THAT THE PRC CONTINUES TO MAINTAIN PERSONNEL ON WOODY AND LINCOLN ISLANDS WITH A MINIMAL PRESENCE ON SOME OF THE OTHER NORTHERN ISLANDS IN THE PARACEL/HSISHA GROUP. HOWEVER, EXCEPT FOR THE RECENT VIETNAMESE REPORTS ON ROBERT ISLAND, WE HAVE NO INFO THAT THE PRC HAS MOVED TO OCCUPY ANY MORE OF THE DISPUTED ISLANDS. PRC NAVAL VESSELS ARE FREQUENTLY SEEN IN THE AREA CARRYING OUT RE-SUPPLY OF ITS PERSONNEL AND MANEUVERS IN THE OPEN WATER BETWEEN THE PARACELS AND HAINAN ISLAND.

4. THE PRC FOREIGN MINISTRY STATEMENT OF JAN. 11, 1974, INCLUDED ALL OF THE ISLANDS UNDER DISPUTE AS "PARTS OF CHINA'S TERRITORY," CLAIMED THE NATURAL RESOURCES IN THE SEAS AROUND THEM, AND DECLARED SAIGON'S ACTION TO INCORPORATE THEM INTO SOUTH VIETNAM "ILLEGAL AND NULL AND VOID." THE STATEMENT ASSERTED THAT THE PRC WOULD "NEVER TOLERATE" AN INFRINGEMENT ON ITS TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY--THE SAME WARNING IT HAD DIRECTED AGAINST THE PHILIPPINES IN 1971--BUT AGAIN DID NOT THREATEN ANY SPECIFIC RETALIATION.

5. COMMENT: HAVING PUT ITS POSITION ON THE RECORD, WE DOUBT THAT THE PRC PLANS ANY FOLLOW-UP ACTION UNLESS GVN DECIDES TO TAKE MILITARY ACTION AGAINST PRC VESSELS OR PERSONNEL, MOVES TO OCCUPY
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 HONG K 00751 181039Z

OTHER DISPUTED ISLANDS OR AUTHORIZES ACTUAL OIL EXPLORATION OFF THEM. WE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION EMBASSY SAIGON MAY HAVE ON THIS "CONFRONTATION."
OSBORN

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PETROLEUM, ISLAND CLAIMS, MILITARY EXERCISES, EXPLORATORY DRILLING
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 JAN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974HONGK00751
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X2
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: HONG KONG
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740132/aaaabegr.tel
Line Count: 111
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 JUL 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 JUL 2002 by rowelle0>; APPROVED <26 DEC 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RVN/PRC DISPUTE OVER SOUTH CHINA SEAS ISLANDS SUMMARY: DESPITE SOUTH VIETNAMESE CLAIMS OF INCREASED PRC
TAGS: PFOR, VS, CH
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005